United Nations S/2011/537

Security Council

Distr.: General
25 August 2011

Original: English

Identical letters dated 25 August 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write in relation to the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), due on 30 August 2011. In this regard, I wish to reiterate Israel's appreciation of and ongoing support for the indispensable role played by UNIFIL, including its commanders and troops on the ground, in promoting stability in the region.

However, notwithstanding these achievements, several alarming factors continue to exist in southern Lebanon, in grave violation of Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). In this regard, there are three core issues which I would like to reiterate: the expansion of Hizbullah's arsenal, its modus operandi from within civilian populated areas and the obstruction of UNIFIL movement by Hizbullah, jeopardizing UNIFIL's ability to effectively fulfil its mandate.

Firstly, the continued presence of the terrorist organization Hizbullah in southern Lebanon and its extensive military build-up and armed entrenchment places the bulk of Israel's population under grave and ongoing threat.

Hizbullah's arsenal continues to expand rapidly. This terrorist organization possesses tens of thousands of missiles and rockets as it seeks to acquire even more advanced weapons, through joint and coordinated transfer of illegal arms supplies by Iran and directly facilitated by Syria across the Syrian-Lebanese border. In addition, there are further reports that Hizbullah maintains arms depots and military operatives in Syria.

While the United Nations and others in the international community are aware of the scope and magnitude of these transfers, the insufficient enforcement of the existing arms embargo and the lack of progress in the disarmament and disbandment of Hizbullah and other militias as mandated by Security Council resolutions remain serious causes for concern. In addition, the failure to publicly recognize Iranian efforts to train, harbour, finance and supply the terrorist organization Hizbullah is another major cause for concern, particularly in view of Security Council resolution 1747 (2007), which prohibits Iran from exporting any arms and related materials.

The second issue of grave concern relates to Hizbullah's deliberate modus operandi within civilian populated areas, in clear violation of the most basic norms and principles of international law. Since the deployment of UNIFIL forces in 2006,

Please recycle

Hizbullah's modus operandi and tactics have shifted towards intentionally embedding its military infrastructure within civilian villages and residential areas, adjacent to and sometimes within schools, hospitals, houses of worship and residential buildings. Hizbullah continues to store advanced conventional weapons and long-range missiles within the fabric of civilian villages in southern Lebanon, including in the area of UNIFIL operations. Thus, for example, command and control headquarters, firing positions and storage centres are concealed deep within civilian populations. To this effect, Hizbullah has amassed anti-tank missiles, improvised explosive devices, unmanned aerial vehicles as well as thousands of rockets and missiles, routinely deploying them in densely populated rural areas in Lebanon, including south of the Litani River. This exploitation of civilians as human shields not only exposes them to great danger but also stands in grave violation of the principle of distinction under international law.

Beyond its extensive growing arsenal, Hizbullah has also constructed a massive web of tunnels and underground storage depots throughout Lebanon, including south of the Litani River.

Israel has provided on numerous occasions detailed information pertaining to the modus operandi of Hizbullah including in-depth presentations regarding Hizbullah's activities in the village of Al-Khiyam south of the Litani River. Furthermore, the explosions in the villages of Khirbat Salim on 14 July 2009, in Tayr Filsi on 12 October 2009 and in Shehabiyya on 3 September 2010 are clear evidence of Hizbullah's military build-up in these areas as Hizbullah embeds itself and its weapons into the fabric of civilian villages.

Thirdly, no less troubling is Hizbullah's growing attempt to obstruct the UNIFIL mission by using so-called civilians, deliberately endangering the international force in an effort to reduce UNIFIL's capacity to fulfil its mandate. This dangerous pattern was clearly evident in recent terrorist attacks against UNIFIL forces on 27 May and 26 July 2011. It is further indicated in the periodic reports under resolution 1701 (2006), which refer to a range of activities to impede UNIFIL's work, including throwing stones, threatening United Nations forces with weapons, blocking patrols and confiscating equipment. These activities are part of Hizbullah's modus operandi and should be adequately acknowledged as such by the United Nations. Clearly, the freedom of movement of UNIFIL is increasingly impeded by Hizbullah operatives who use the local population to disrupt the work of peacekeepers. In that regard, UNIFIL must remain vigilant and use the necessary and appropriate means to carry out its mandate to its fullest.

These alarming realities pose a serious threat to the security of the State of Israel and to regional stability. Israel has cautioned against them in numerous letters and statements to the Secretary-General and the Security Council. In view of the upcoming renewal of the UNIFIL mandate, we reiterate the need for the United Nations to address these matters in an operative and appropriate manner.

In this respect, the Lebanese government bears particular responsibility and must take effective measures to prevent the rearmament of Hizbullah pursuant to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). Furthermore, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces must confront these realities, by ensuring an area free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons between the Blue Line and the Litani River.

The ongoing Syrian and Iranian efforts to support, finance and arm Hizbullah must also be addressed swiftly and decisively by the international community.

Finally, I wish to reiterate Israel's commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and its implementation, as well as to its ongoing cooperation with UNIFIL.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ron **Prosor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative